

86 year-olds have....

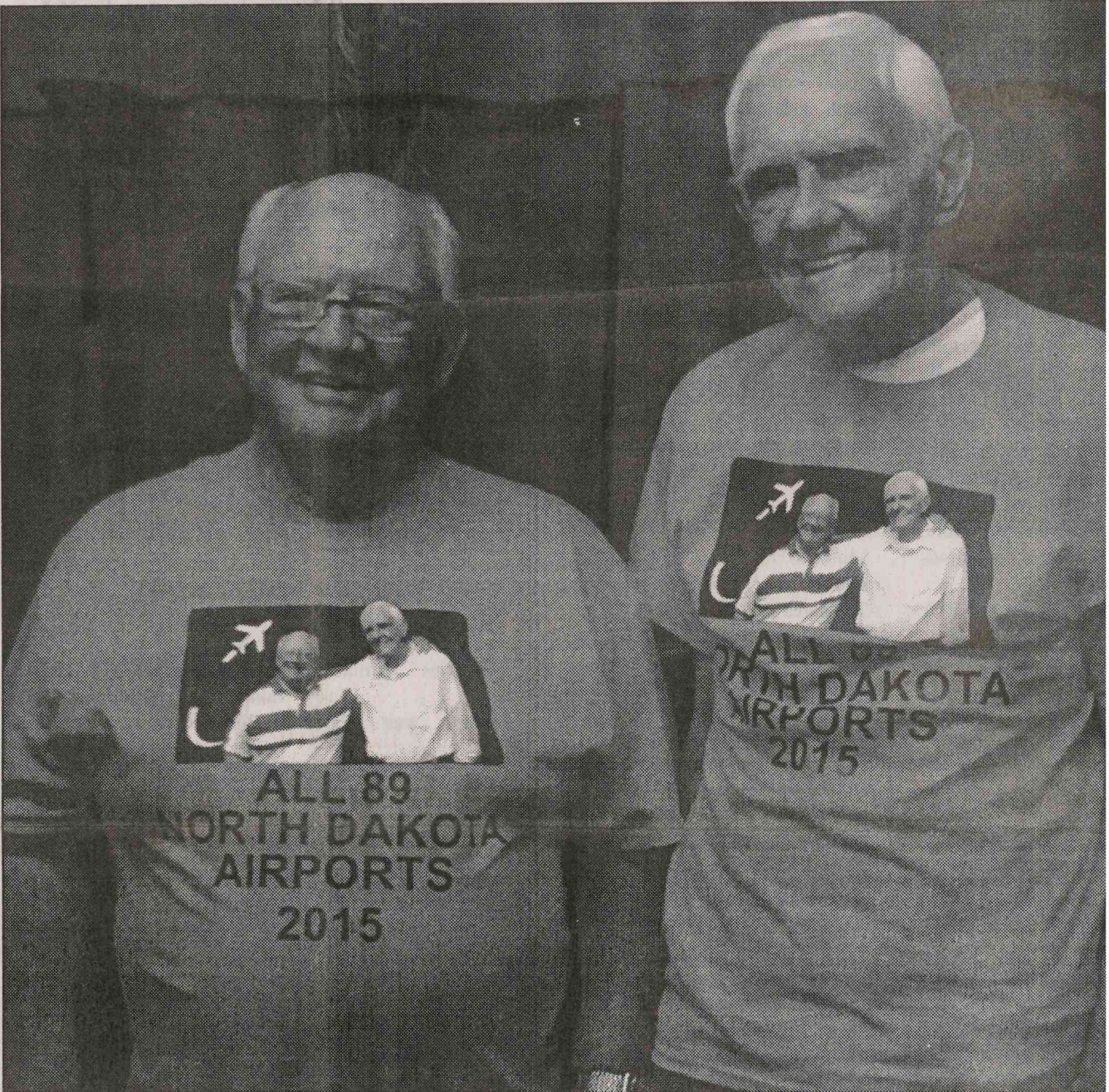
89 TOUCHDOWNS

By Ruth E. McCleerey  
TOUCHDOWN number 89! Yes, 89 TOUCHDOWNS!  
The touchdowns that we are speaking about are aerial touchdowns at every airport in the State of North Dakota..... and the feat has been done by two cancer survivor pilots, both aged 86 with birthdays only six days apart. Their adventure began the Summer of 2013 with their first touchdown at the Lisbon Airport and ended on Sunday, August 2nd.  
The two pilots are Enderlin, ND farmer Hubert "Hubie" Bleese and Duvall, WA hardware stores owner (and formerly from Enderlin, ND), Frances "Fuzz" Cox.

These two men have been good friends since high school. Their lives have taken them in different directions, but their friendship stayed strong over the years.  
Fuzz, after being released from the US Army, went out to the state of Washington and became a pro-ski instructor and attended college. He later went into banking, eventually becoming an owner. In later years, and currently, he owns and operates two hardware stores in Duvall.  
Hubie, following his stint in the US Navy on an aircraft carrier, where they went around the world to every continent, came home to farm and go to college at North Dakota State University.  
And both, on their own, got their pilot's licenses.  
Hubie got the idea for the 'touchdowns' after reading an article in the FAA Aviation magazine. The program is called "Create a Flying Legacy in North Dakota". In order to participate in the program, you must be a certified pilot, and sign up to receive your Legacy Passport.

and consequently the number of airports was smaller than planned.  
In 2014 they only made it to twenty airports, so this year, 2015, they really got serious, and were nearing the finish line.... and the finish line was a cattle pasture on their way to a touchdown in Elgin.  
Hubie's plane, a 1975 Piper Cherokee Warrior, which he had owned and flown for thirty-eight years, was cruising at approximately 1000 feet on August 2nd, at 1:30pm, when there was a loud bang and the engine got rough with a lot of vibrating. Both men knew there was something radically wrong, and they started looking for a place to land.  
Fuzz was the pilot at the time, so Hubie got on the radio with a distress signal and Fuzz turned the plane, to glide into the wind. The terrain they were over was steep hills, and then they spotted a pasture with a couple hundred cattle grazing and prepared to land, while looking for power lines and anything else that could be an obstacle. They came in at approximately 80mph and stopped within about 300 feet with, thankfully, no rocks or badger holes to contend with.  
Within a couple minutes, the rancher who had been checking his cattle and saw their plane come down, drove up on a 4-wheeler. Another pilot in the area had heard the distress signal and stayed on the radio and circled above to make sure they were safe and sound on the ground before leaving.

Dale Will, the rancher, called his wife Lori at home, and she came with a car and they loaded up their gear and went to their house that must



Hubert "Hubie" Bleese and Frances "Fuzz" Cox. Proudly displaying their T-shirts designed by Crea8tive T's, Ende...

and they sent out a pilot and plane to assist the loading up of the plane, which was not damaged. Lori's father, her brother and a neighbor arranged to have a stack mover there for the loading.  
The Hillsboro pilot directed

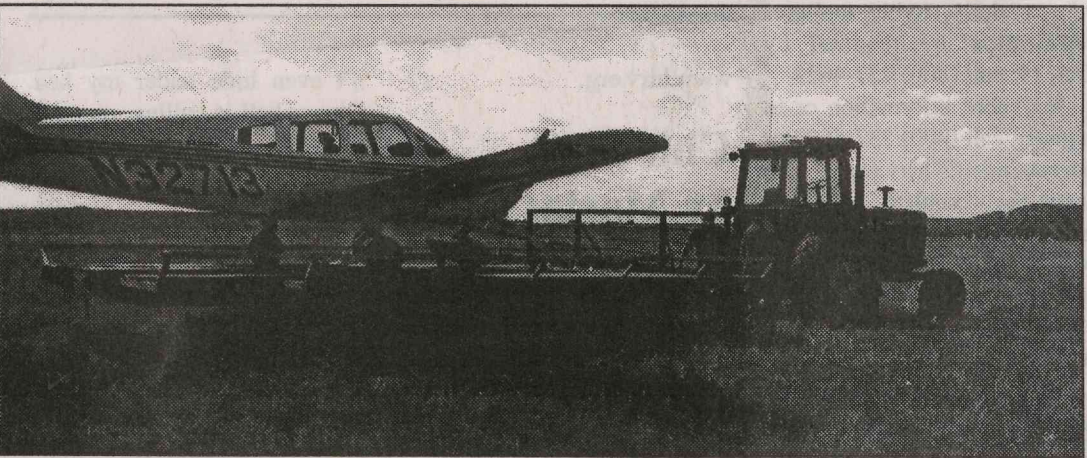
that the best part of the whole adventure, was meeting so many wonderful people. Many of the small North Dakota airports do not have personnel on site, or even paved landing strips but people are only a phone call away, and many times, someone would come and give them a ride into town for a meal and visiting.  
Hubie said that the nicest grass landing airport was in Kulm, and they even treated them to a meal at the local cafe. And at the New Town airport the pilot/grocery store owner that came to the airport to greet them, told them that Jay Clauson, former owner of Jay's

Food Pride in Enderlin, worked for him.... small world one more time.  
The friends, Hubie and

house number in 32713, is the same nu is on the tail of Hubie 32713!



Fuzz, have had a lot of good times, sharing their love of flying and remembering all the good times they have had. Just a funny karma thing: Fuzz's leather insignia j another story in the and possibly finding their 'Bucket List' in their future.



Loaded and headed to the hangar.

The Passport has all of North Dakota's airports listed in block form, similiary to a travel passport, and a place for a verification of landing stamp.  
Hubie said that there have been ten or twelve pilots that have received this verification but he is pretty sure that he and Fuzz are the oldest pilots to accomplish the 89 touchdowns.  
The first year, 2013, the two men touched down at twenty or twenty-one airports. The summer had a lot of rainy spells,

have been seven or eight miles away over ranch trails. She fed them lunch and then they determined who they should call for help.  
The Wills took them into Elgin for the night, and the next morning the local banker volunteered space in his hangar to park the plane. In a small rural North Dakota town, word travels fast and he stepped up to help.  
Hubie contacted his one-site aviation company in Hillsboro

a proper loading of the plane so that it would not be damaged in transit. The plane is currently still in Elgin in the banker's hangar but will be moved to Hillsboro for a complete engine overhaul soon.  
The last two airports left besides Elgin was Grand Forks and Fargo, and their Hillsboro pilot helped them accomplish these landings and getting their passport stamps.  
Reminiscing about the Passport landings, Hubie said



LeRoy Weikum, (Laurie Will's Father), "Hubie" and "Fuzz."

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